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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8037
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1879
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1679
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1103
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1492

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000556

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
INL FOR KEVIN BROWN AND ANGELIC YOUNG
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2018
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#) [ECON](#)
SUBJECT: COST OF LIVING PROTESTS IN HAITI: UPDATE AS OF
1630, LOCAL, 4/08/08

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 551

PORT AU PR 00000556 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Demonstrations continued in Port-au-Prince for a second day with greater violence. Since about 0900 hrs, there have been several reports of demonstrations in different neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince calling for the resignation of President Preval and the Prime Minister. The buildings housing the mission's Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) and Public Diplomacy (PD) offices were stoned; the CIS facility sustaining arson damage. All CIS and PD personnel are safe at the chancery compound. Chancery, warehouse, USAID and Consulate compounds are secure. MINUSTAH reported to poloff nearly 5,000 demonstrators breached the gate of the National Palace about mid-morning, demanding President Preval to speak to the people, but were subsequently repulsed. President Preval plans to address the country later today. Demonstrations continued yesterday in Les Cayes, resulting in one death. EAC decided to await security developments to judge when best to transport employees home by in armored-vehicle convoy. End summary.

Security Situation in Port-au-Prince

12. (SBU) At times violent groups of protestors ranging from the dozens into the hundreds have ranged throughout the capital and nearby Petionville since early morning April 8. Nearly all businesses in the capital and nearby Petionville are closed, public transport has been shut down by a strike of private taxis ('tap taps') (see reftel), and many roads are compromised by burning tires and other roadblocks.

13. (SBU) A crowd stoned and set fire to a building in the same complex as the Embassy's Citizenship and Immigration Services building at approximately 10:30 am local. RSO evacuated all staff from the building to chancery compound. RSO also evacuated the nearby Embassy Public Diplomacy building at the same time after it was stoned by demonstrators. (Note: The Public Diplomacy building is a

separate building located about 150 yards from the Chancery. End note). There were groups of demonstrators burning tires, throwing stones and discharging firearms in the vicinity of the consulate. Gunfire was heard in the vicinity of the Embassy at approximately 10:30 am local.

¶4. (C) Palace Security Director confirmed to ARSO that a crowd demanding that the President speak to them, forced open the side gate of the National Palace (Note: The National Palace houses the offices of the President as well as his staff. End note) MINUSTAH forces and Palace security later expelled the intruders and re-secured the gate. The Palace structure itself was not compromised. President's Economic Advisor Gabriel Verret told the Ambassador later in the afternoon that at no time did he nor did any other staffers in Palace feel threatened or unsafe. He added that he believes the crowds that convened at the Palace gate were attempting to aggravate the situation and ignite violence.

¶5. (SBU) UNPOL US Contingent Commander told poloff aprox. 1200 hrs. that the Prime Minister's residence was surrounded by about 1,000 protestors, however, MINUSTAH's Jordanian contingents and CIMO had maintained security of the residence. UNPOL confirmed media reports about 1430 hrs that the PM's residence had been set on fire. Officials in the Prime Minister's office tell us the damage was minimal.

Political Situation

¶6. (C) Radio reports say that President Preval, who has been silent since the disturbances began April 3, will make a public address later today, April 8. President Preval's Chief of Staff Fritz Longchamp told the Ambassador mid-morning April 8 that the President remained in his office at the Palace working, and was concerned but calm. President's Adviser Bob Manuel told the Ambassador the

PORT AU PR 00000556 002.2 OF 003

morning of April 8 that the answer to these public disorders had to be a political response, and in the "political process." He said he would propose to the President that he convene consultations between the government, political parties, and civil society organizations to discuss an economic response. Manuel said he would ask President Preval to "talk to the people" and explain the situation. He conceded that society needed better answers, and that the President's "political team" has not performed well. He implied that Preval would have to replace Prime Minister Alexis.

EAC - Embassy Community

¶7. (SBU) Ambassador convened an EAC meeting at 0900. The EAC decided that RSO would determine the optimal time for Embassy personnel to return home in armored vehicle convoys. Embassy has issued a new warden message to reflect the evolving security situation in the capital. Since roads in downtown Port-au-Prince, where Embassy is located, have been compromised by the disturbances, EAC directed RSO to place Embassy official vehicles closer to the Union school to facilitate transport home for the children. Embassy will decide later April 8 whether to open the Chancery for business on April 9 or to allow Embassy employees to work from home.

¶8. (SBU) Post secured safe transportation of the Embassy's children attending the Union School (Embassy's designated school) to an Embassy officer's residence after the school administration decided to suspend classes. There are 6 children.

New Embassy Compound (NEC)

¶9. (SBU) Ambassador noted in the EAC that these disturbances will delay the move to the new Chancery (NEC), which was to have started on April 10 and continued through April 20. Post will be evaluating new plans for move.

Diplomatic and UN Community

¶10. (SBU) Canadian emboff told poloff that about 1145 hrs, a crowd of about 100 marched past the Canadian Embassy, hurling large stones at the building. Staff that had not left earlier will remain inside until the situation calms. The Canadians report they plan to begin moving their staff to their residences by convoy at approximately 1600 based on reported improvements in the Delmas road area.

¶11. (SBU) MINUSTAH high-level contact reported to Pol Couns that MINUSTAH staff in Port-au-Prince is locked down within its compound until further notice. The French Ambassador reported to Ambassador that his staff too, were remaining within the confines of its compound until the security situation permits them to leave.

¶12. (SBU) The National Democratic Institute (NDI) based in Port-au-Prince reported to poloff that about 3-4 bullets were shot through the window of their office at Delmas 71. A few staff had gone to the terrace to observe events outside of the building when the shots were fired. NDI staffer also reported protestors having thrown rocks at the door of the building and broke the windows of the bookstore across the street from NDI's office.

¶13. (SBU) Further NGO, Business Community Incidents

- Consular Section has been in contact with many of post's wardens during the day, both by email and telecon. New Warden toince has been issues.

- Save the Children contact in Bourdon reported that

PORT AU PR 00000556 003.2 OF 003

their staff and students are remaining on campus until security improves such that they may leave.

- National Center for State Courts (NCSC), an American organization that implements USAID's justice reform program, reported about 1300 hrs. that large numbers of protesters around their building had forced their staff to remain in their office building but were all fine.

- Director of Air France told PD officer that as he headed to the airport, he was informed that his own Air France office had been ransacked. The French Embassy came to the scene to assist staff in evacuating. Protesters also ransacked a cafQ nearby Air France's office.

- AMCHAM President reports that his organization, along with other business leaders, are posied to meet with president Preval tomorrow and will urge him to mae a clearn sweep of his cbainet, although they remain conflisted on the future of PM Alexis. Citibank, Comcel and other U.S. businesses in the city were hit by rocks, he reports, but no sigifnicant damage occured.

LES Demonstrations Update

¶14. (C) April 08, protests against the high cost of living have continued for a fifth day. UNPOL Commander Eddy Lindor on April 07 reported that a group of approximately 500-600 protestors went to the home of Senator Gabriel Fortune, whose

district includes Les Cayes, to protest his public statements regarding the protests in Les Cayes. During the initial confrontation a protestor was apparently shot and killed by the deputy's guards. The house was subsequently breached by members of the group and ransacked. A team of Haitian National Police (HNP) led by UNPOL rescued the Senator and transferred him to Port-au-Prince.

SANDERSON